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ABSTRACT

Ideal levels of aspiration, real levels of aspiration, and fear of success have been identified as precursors of black women's career attainment. Black (N=32) and white (N=32) females, talented high school sophomores, completed a test battery comprised of two verbal cues designed to measure fear of success and a self-report questionnaire to assess ideal and real occupational aspirations, parental expectations, and parental educational and occupational attainment. Results indicated that the black subjects had high levels of aspiration. Fathers' occupational expectations were significantly related to their daughters' ideal and real levels of aspirations. White subjects did not differ from blacks in their aspiration levels; however, they had a lower incidence than black adolescents of fear of success. Comparisons of socioeconomic status as measured by Hollingshead's "Two Factor Index of Social Position" suggested that socioeconomic factors exerted a strong influence on subject responses. (Author/NRB)

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OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF TALENTED BLACK ADOLESCENT FEMALES

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OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF TALENTED BLACK ADOLESCENT FEMALES

This study is an attempt to explore Burlew's (1977) theory of career choice among Black women for its application to the occupational choice of talented Black adolescent females. This theory has several assumptions: first, that career choice of Black women is governed by their occupational aspirations, occupational expectations and their attitudes about the social consequences of career accomplishments (FOS). The second set of assumptions are related to the Black woman's interaction with significant others and the experience of members of her race and sex in the world of work.

Burlew beleives that these factors also influence the occupational choice of White women: however, their impact on Black women result in significantly different outcomes. Support is found for Burlew's theory in existing research and theory (Almquist & Angrist, 1970: Atkinson, 1964, Epstein, 1973: Horner, 1968, Kirpatrick, 1973; Scanzioni, 1971).

The following hypotheses were explored:

1. Talented Black adolescent females have higher Ideal and Real levels of occupational aspiration than White adolescent females from comparable SES.

2. Talented Black adolescent females aspire to Ideal and Real occupations that are more non-traditional than talented White adolescent females from comparable SES.
3. At each SES parents of talented Black adolescent females will differ from parents of talented White adolescent females in the level of occupational expectation that they hold for their daughters.
4. Talented White adolescent females will have higher incidence of FOS than talented Black adolescent females.
5. Talented upper middle class Black subjects will have a higher incidence of FOS than talented lower middle class Black subjects.

METHODOLOGY

The subjects were 64 talented adolescent females (32 Black and 32 White), sophomores in high school, who consented to participate in a career development program. They responded to a test battery which included two verbal cues designed to measure fear of success (FOS) and a self-report questionnaire that assessed Ideal and Real occupational aspirations, parental expectations (LOX), parental educational and occupational attainment. Hollingshead's Two Factor Index of Social Position (1975) was used to determine the socioeconomic status (SES) of the subject's father. In addition, the "Occupation"

subscale of the Index was used to assign a level to the subjects' levels of aspiration. The occupation to which the subject's aspired were evaluated for its traditionality (Role Innovative, Moderate and Traditional). The verbal cues were scored for the presence of negative imagery.

RESULTS

LEVEL OF ASPIRATION

The means and standard deviations of the Ideal level of occupational aspiration of talented upper middle class Black and White adolescent females indicate that upper class White subjects have higher Ideal mean LOA (Mean= 1.545) than upper middle class Black subjects (Mean= 2.100), Lower middle class Black subjects have a higher Ideal mean (LOA (Mean= 1.515) than their White counterpart (Mean= 2.300); however, the differences does not attain significance. The hypothesis of higher mean Ideal level of aspiration for Black subjects was not supported.

Means and standard deviations for the Real level of occupational aspiration of upper and lower middle class subjects indicate that Black subjects from both SES groups have higher mean score. One way analysis of variances were performed to determine differences between the attained means: significant F's were not attained. This hypothesis was not supported.

TRADITIONALITY

The mean Ideal and Real traditionality scores obtained for each group of subjects reveal that all subjects aspired to occupations in each traditionality category. The minimum traditionality scores indicate that talented Black subjects expressed preference for occupations that were more Role Innovative than talented White adolescent females. Two one-way analysis of variance were performed to determine the relationship between means. Thus the hypothesized difference between the traditionality scores of talented Black and White adolescent females was not realized.

PARENTAL LEVEL OF OCCUPATIONAL EXPECTATION

Testing of this hypothesis was problematic due to the small number of parents for whom complete data were available (N=8, White=5, Black=3). The attained means for this group were 4.8 and 4.6 respectively, with an F ($F=.001$, $df=1/6$, $p < .970$). These findings cannot be interpreted with any degree of confidence.

Evaluation of the mean preference levels of Black mothers and fathers and White mothers and fathers at each socioeconomic level provides some insight into the preference levels of the two groups. White parents in the upper middle class subgroups held Level I-II preferences for their daughters. While no data were available for mothers of Black participants, Black

fathers expressed preferences for their daughters to enter Level I occupations. Lower middle class White mothers and fathers expressed preferences for their daughters that were in Level II, while Black fathers and mothers expressed preferences for occupations in Levels I and II. (See Table I) The hypothesized differences in levels of expectation were not supported.

Table I

MEAN EXPECTATION LEVELS OF BLACK AND WHITE MOTHERS AND FATHERS BY SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

RACE		Mean Preference Levels		
Socioeconomic Status	N	Mothers	N	Fathers
Upper Middle Class				
White	5	1,000	5	1,400
Black	0	.	3	1,000
Lower Middle Class				
White	4	2,000	5	2,000
Black	4	2,000	5	2,000
TOTAL	13	1,667	16	1,400

*Levels of expectation range from a low of 1.0 to a high of 7.0

MOTIVE TO AVOID SUCCESS

The hypothesis that the M-S response would be higher among talented White adolescent females was not supported. The responses of the White subjects did not achieve significance at the .05 level (X^2=1.37, df=1, p<.241);

however, Chi-square for Black subjects was significant at the .001 level ($x=9.79$, $df=1$, $p<.001$).

Lower middle class Black subjects had a higher incidence of M-S ($x^2=10.889$, $df=1$, $p<.001$) than upper middle class Black subjects ($x^2=.4978$, $df=1$, $p<.4805$). The only other socioeconomic status subgroup that attained a chi-square that approached significance was that of upper middle class White subjects ($x^2= 2.47$, $df=f$, $p<$ .116). Thus, the hypothesis of higher incidence of M-S among upper middle class Black subjects was not supported.

DISCUSSION

Ideal levels of aspiration, Real levels of aspiration and fear of success were identified by Burlew as precursors of the Black woman's career attainment. Her model of career choice for Black women identifies the above variables as influencing career choice in addition to the Black women's perceptions of others'

The findings of the present study indicated that talented Black adolescent females had high levels of aspiration. (see Table 2) Additional findings indicated that fathers' occupational expectations were significantly related to their daughters' Ideal and Real levels of

aspirations.

Burlew's model does not address the effect of socio-economic status on the levels of aspiration of Black subjects. This variable (socioeconomic status) exerted a strong effect in some of the analysies. Lower middle class Black subjects expressed higher levels of aspirations and resembled upper middle class White subjects to a greater extent than upper middle class Black subjects. When the incidence of fear of success was explored among Black adolescents, lower middle class subjects had a significantly higher incidence than upper middle class subjects. These talented lower middle class Black subjects had mobility aspirations, however, the consequence of these aspirations was increased anxiety about success.

The talented White adolescent females did not differ from Black subjects in their levels of aspirations, however, they had a lower incidence of fear of success than Black adolescents. Socioeconomic status comparisons revealed that lower middle class Whites resembled upper middle class Blacks in their levels of aspiration but had a higher incidence of fear of success than upper middle class Black and White subjects.

In general the findings relative to the model suggest that the relationship between the variables differs for talented Black and White adolescent females. Thus the variables proposed by the model might operate differently for Black and White

subjects when socioeconomic status is the criterion. Socioeconomic factors seem to exert a strong influence on the subjects' response.

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TABLE II

OCCUPATION ASPIRATION OF TALENTED BLACK AND WHITE ADOLESCENT FEMALES (BY SES)

UPPER MIDDLE CLASS	LOWER MIDDLE CLASS
Accountant	Airline Reservationist
Architect	Business Administration
Author	Dentist
Biologist	Engineer
Commercial Artist	Journalist
Entertainer, Actress	Lawyer
Fashion Designer	Medical Record Librarian
Guidance Counselor	Musician
Physical Therapist	Physician
Psychologist, practicing, research	Practical Nurse
Public Relations, publicity	Psychologist, practicing research
Teacher, Elementary School	Radio-TV Announcer
Veterinarian	Registered Nurse
	Special Educator
	Veterinarian